

Message Text

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73

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 AID-05 AGR-10 DODE-00 PA-02

USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 L-02 /068 W

----- 053003

R 152148Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9053

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 0205

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PINT, ELAB, HO

SUBJ: PUBLIC REACTION TO NEW GOH AGRARIAN REFORM LAW

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 0107

1. HONDURAN NEWSPAPERS CONTINUE TO CARRY MANY ARTICLES CONCERNING REACTIONS OF VARIOUS GROUPS TO THE NEW AGRARIAN REFORM LEGISLATION WHICH WENT INTO EFFECT JANUARY 14. THE RESPONSE OF MOST GROUPS CONTINUES TO BE MODERATE WITH GENERAL SUPPORT BY CAMPESINO AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AND SPECIFIC MILD CRITICISM BY PRIVATE SECTOR GROUPS. THE GENERAL TONE OF COMMENTS IS CHARACTERIZED BY A RESERVE NOT IN EVIDENCE IN THE OFTEN IMPASSIONED ARGUMENTS HEARD DURING THE PERIOD BEFORE THE LAW'S RELEASE. SPECIFIC COMMENTS FOLLOW.

2. THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HONDURAN CAMPESINOS (ANACH) HAS ISSUED A GENERALLY FAVORABLE EVALUATION FOLLOWING A SPECIAL

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MEETING CALLED TO STUDY THE NEW LAW. ANACH SAYS THAT IN

GENERAL TERMS THE LAW "RESPONDS TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF THE COUNTRY AND TO THE LEGITIMATE ASPIRATIONS OF HONDURAN CAMPESINOS." THE ASSOCIATION CITES A NUMBER OF ARTICLES WHICH MOST BE CAREFULLY TREATED IN THE LAW'S BODY OF REGULATIONS (NOW BEING PREPARED). ANACH SPECIFICALLY COMMENTS ON THE OBVIOUS POINT THAT THE NEW LAW, TO BE EFFECTIVE, MUST BE ENFORCED (IN CONTRAST TO THE UNENFORCED 1962 LEGISLATION). FINALLY, ANACH OFFERS ITS COOPERATION TO THE GOH IN THE APPLICATION OF THE LAW AND REITERATES ITS SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS EFFORTS TO BRING OUT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. THE NATIONAL CAMPESINO UNION (UNC), ANACH'S SOCIAL CHRISTIAN COMPETITOR, HAS EXPRESSED LUKE-WARM SUPPORT OF THE LAW BUT AT THE SAME TIME RESERVED ITS OPTIONS TO PRESSURE THE GOH TO FULFILL ITS OBLIGATIONS TO THE CAMPESINOS THROUGH MEANS NOT CONTEMPLATED IN THE LAW.

3. LABOR LEADER VICTOR ARTILES (SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CTH) HAS REITERATED HIS EARLIER SUPPORT OF THE LAW AND FORMER CGT PRESIDENT ALFONSO COTARELO (NOW PRESIDENT OF THE CHRISTIAN TAXI OWNERS' UNION SIMPROH AND BOARD MEMBER OF FASH) HAS SAID THAT THE LAW IS ACCEPTABLE. COTARELO CRITICIZED THE UNC FOR ITS RECENT OCCUPATION OF THE SAN PEDRO SULA OFFICES OF THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN INSTITUTE (INA) AND SAID THAT CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD SUPPORT THE LAW. HE ADDED THAT FOR THE LAW TO BE FULLY EXECUTED THE GOH WOULD HAVE TO SECURE SOURCES OF FUNDING IN ADDITION TO THOSE EXTANT.

4. THE DIRECTOR OF A CATHOLIC CHURCH STUDY GROUP (LA PASTORAL NACIONAL), FATHER JORGE MATUS, HAS COMMENTED THAT THE CHANGES IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR CONTEMPLATED IN THE NEW LAW ARE WORTHWHILE BUT THAT THE LAW WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY ENFORCED. HE ADDS THAT AGRARIAN REFORM CANNOT BE REALIZED BY MERELY ENACTING LEGISLATION. THE CAMPESINO MUST BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS AND CANNOT HAVE A REFORM MERELY IMPOSED UPON HIM. THE SPECIFIC FAULT FOUND IN THE LAW BY MATUS IS THAT INA WILL TAKE OVER SUCH LARGE QUANTITIES OF LAND THAT IT WILL OF NECESSITY BECOME A LARGE BUREAUCRACY THAT WILL NOT BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NATION'S NEEDS.

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5. THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS AND CATTLEMEN (FENAGH) HAS ISSUED A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT "ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE" IMPOSED BY THE NEW LAW WHILE CLAIMING THAT MANY OF ITS PROVISIONS ARE UNCONSTITUTIONAL. FENAGH CONCLUDES THAT THE LAW DISCRIMINATES AGAINST PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AND ASKS TO PARTICIPATE IN CREATING THE BODY OF REGULATIONS UNDER WHICH THE NEW

LAW WILL OPERATE.

6. COMMENT: MATUS APPARENTLY SPEAKS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS GROUP RATHER THAN FOR THE ARCHBISHOP WHOSE VIEWS ARE NOT YET KNOWN. FENAGH PLANS TO MAKE PUBLIC A MUCH MORE DETAILED CRITIQUE OF THE LAW. COHEP, THE HONDURAN PRIVATE ENTERPRISE COUNCIL, ALSO PLANS TO PREPARE A LIMITED DISTRIBUTION DOCUMENT BUT DOES NOT INTEND ITT AS A PUBLIC STATEMENT. WHEN THESE TWO DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE, THEY WILL BE ANALYSED SEPTEL.
SANCHEZ

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, AGRICULTURAL LAW, LAND REFORMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TEGUCI00205
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750017-0707
From: TEGUCIGALPA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750148/aaaabqkq.tel
Line Count: 126
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 TEGUCIGALPA 0107
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchant0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2003 by SilvaL0>; APPROVED <07 JAN 2004 by buchant0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PUBLIC REACTION TO NEW GOH AGRARIAN REFORM LAW
TAGS: EAGR, PINT, ELAB, HO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006